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Icterus

by [Buttons15](#)

Summary

The four times Fareeha thought the doctor could not see her blush, and the one time which proved her wrong.

The Hantavirus

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

“Put on the breathing mask, we’re going in,” Mercy commanded on the radio, and Pharah obeyed without hesitation. They walked into the abandoned building together, and the Egyptian found the isolation clothes she wore weren’t too far from her Raptora suit when it came down to the bulk. She carried a bucket of liquid with one hand, the other holding a mop and a dustpan.

It was not unusual that Angela would disappear on the moments between missions, off in a humanitarian incursion here and there – but it was the first time she actually took someone with her. The blonde had sought Pharah out the night before and cordially asked whether the soldier was willing to accompany her for the day. The Egyptian was happy to oblige, of course, but she didn’t really expect this was what they would be doing.

Even though she wasn’t quite sure what exactly *this* was.

“Wait a second,” Mercy called, and Pharah halted automatically. She didn’t really need to understand or even know the objectives to be able to follow orders. The doctor knelt down next to a pile of debris and peeked in –

“Aaah!!”

Pharah was next to her in an instant, dropping the materials on the ground and skidding close, instantly regretting not bringing a weapon – only to see a pair of rats scurry by her feet. Her adrenaline rush instantly changed to relief. Granted, they were almost as big as cats, so she could see why Angela would be alarmed, but still.

“You gave me a scare, doctor Ziegler.”

The other turned her head up to face her, an apologetic expression on her face. “*Es tut mir leid*, Captain Amari. They caught me by surprise. Still, I’m glad I saw them – they have led me to what I needed.”

“A rat den?” she queried, unable to hold her curiosity back any longer.

She heard Angela sigh. “Two children dead from acute respiratory syndrome, one with serious renal failure; what did the three had in common?”

“I… don’t know?” she replied, wondering if the question had been rhetoric. “Um, pet rats?”

Mercy scoffed, a sad smile crossing her face. “Almost. They all came here to play… an ambient shared with rats. My suspicions were correct – it’s Hantavirus.”

“You mean like, the plague?” Pharah questioned, thinking of the first rat-related disease she could remember.

“*Nein*, that’s Yersinia – a bacteria. The Hantavirus is, unfortunately, quicker to kill and harder to treat. So that’s why we’re here today, to get rid of the source.”

“The rats?”

“Their feces,” the doctor corrected, standing. They walked over to where the cleaning material

had been dropped, and Angela bent over and grabbed a sponge from inside the bucket. “Sure, we’ll have to deal with the rats, but you catch it by breathing them in, so disinfection of the source is vital. Here,” Mercy grabbed the mop and handed it to her. “We need to dampen the ambient with the solution before cleaning, so we don’t lift much infected dust.”

Cleaning rat poop, the Egyptian mused. Definitely not what I was expecting for the morning.

“This is probably a bit off your usual line of work,” the blonde spoke, as if reading her mind. “I apologize. I should have warned you beforehand – clean ups are not on your job description, after all.”

“It’s no trouble at all, doctor Ziegler,” she reassured. “I doubt they go on your curriculum either, and yet here you are.”

“Containing epidemics, all in a day’s work,” she countered. “Captain Amari –”

“Call me Fareeha,” the soldier blurted out without thinking, and instantly regretted it when the comm went still for a second. She briefly considered taking it back, but then the creaking of static was silenced once more when Mercy spoke.

“...Fareeha.”

For some unexplainable reason, something about the way the heavily accented word rolled off the doctor’s tongue instantly made her flush. She was right next to the blonde then, and she thanked the gods for the way the isolation clothes surely did cover her face and hide her blush.

“Fareeha?” the other insisted, succeeding only mildly to snap her out of her reverie. “You read me?”

“Yes, doctor Ziegler.”

She watched the woman shake the sponge back and forth, using it to sprinkle water over the ground. She observed it once, twice, then mimicked the movement with her mop, drenching the floor around her.

“Angela,” the doctor corrected. “If we’re going on a first name basis, then it has to be both ways.”

“Angela,” the Egyptian repeated, and the burn on her cheeks intensified.

“It’s your day off. You didn’t have to come,” the other began.

“Nonsense, I –”

“Shh, let me finish,” Mercy cut her off. “I guess what I’m trying to say is, thank you. I wanted you to know how much I appreciate it; you’re doing a lot for these people, capt – Fareeha.”

I’m going to combust. Death by praise.

“As I said, I’m always happy to help,” she answered, completely honest. She loved the satisfaction of being useful, and she could see the doctor’s point: it did feel much better when it didn’t involve hurting or killing anyone.

“Don’t be so willing,” Angela playfully chided. “I may feel tempted to abuse it and recruit you more often.”

Please do.

Chapter End Notes

this game is ruining my life

Subdural Hematoma

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

She dozed off, the corners of her vision blackening, her head dropping forwards, into blissful, blissful sleep – only to be shaken awake by a hand on her shoulder. Her movements sluggish, she turned to the wall, where the clock read three AM.

“Hmmmng,” she complained wordlessly.

“I’m sorry,” Angela replied, her expression truly apologetic. “We don’t have a CT scan and keeping you up is the only way I can be sure your concussion was only that. Open your eyes wide for me.”

Pharah did as she was told without thinking, the impulse to obey a higher ranked officer so deeply ingrained within her, it was automatic. So was the reflex to retract when the doctor shone a bright light on her face.

“Shh, shh,” the other gently murmured, turning the flashlight off. “Pupillary reflexes are looking okay.” She patted the Egyptian’s back lightly. “Nice work, soldier. Only two more hours to go. How are you holding up?”

She rubbed her eyes, irritated. Her head hurt, her stomach twitched inside her, and she still felt a little disoriented, but the exhaustion spoke louder than all of those things.

“Sleepy,” she mumbled. “Headache.”

“Perhaps you’ll learn from it,” Angela jabbed. “And be more careful with that goddamn death-machine of yours -” Her speech was interrupted by a yawn, and not for the first time that day, Pharah felt a twinge of guilt.

“I’m all good now, doctor,” she reassured. “You can go to bed, I’ll be fine.”

“Okay,” Angela replied, crossing her arms over her chest and leaning against a wall. “Walk yourself to your room, soldier.”

Frowning, the Egyptian stood up and stumbled to the door, trying to hide just how dizzy she felt. When she finally reached the exit, however, she realized she didn’t quite remember the way back to her sleeping quarters. Perhaps it was the way the corridors looked so dark that late at night, perhaps it was the way the ground seemed to spin, and *yes, fine*, it probably was her concussion –

“Well?” the doctor dared, and she could all but hear the smile in her face. She sighed.

“Maybe I’ll stay a little longer,” she bitterly admitted, and then, before she could stop herself: “I can’t waste any chances of having you all for myself.”

What the actual FUCK Fareeha –

She heard the doctor scoff. “To be honest, with the way you act, I’m actually wondering if the med bay should have a mug with your name in it.”

“Maybe I just like your company,” she shot back.

It's the concussion. It's definitely the concussion. I can't stop myself.

“Hmm...have you considered asking me out? Instead of locking me in with more work?” the blonde turned to face her, a lopsided grin on her face. “I mean. Just a thought, you know?”

I'm delirious.

“Uh. I think I'll have a seat.”

She thought she saw Mercy's grin widen on her way to the stretcher, but her head was buzzing and she wasn't sure. She was quite positive she was flushing like a sorry tomato, the burn on her cheeks impossible to ignore, but the lights were dim and she told herself that in the dark, the other couldn't see her blush.

“What are you even waiting for, anyway?” she asked the first question that came to mind in order to change the subject.

“Any signs of internal skull bleeding,” Angela explained, taking a seat on top of the desk opposite to Pharah. Her legs hung from it, feet not touching the floor. “Confusion, nausea – those are common after a concussion. But I have to periodically test your reflexes for about six hours before ruling out a subdural hematoma.”

“Right,” she nodded, even though she didn't understand much. The movement made her dizzy. “And if I do get one of those...”

“I drill a hole in your skull and drain it,” the doctor answered, nonchalant.

“Ha-ha.” A pause. “Wait. You're not joking, are you?”

“Nein.”

Pharah realized right then and there that she didn't want to think about it. Running a hand through her hair, brushing her fingers against the bandages wrapped around her skull, she lowered herself down and laid sideways, so she could still make eye contact with the other. Putting her weight on her shoulder made it hurt slightly.

A comfortable silence grew between them, and Fareeha used the moment to take in the doctor's shape. She'd long removed the white coat, which hung on the back of her chair, and now sported only a black sleeveless turtleneck, old white jeans, a pair of ugly white crocs and red glasses, which did little to hide the rings under her eyes and yet perfectly matched the red stethoscope hung over her neck –

“You're staring.”

An alarm bell went out on the Egyptian's brain.

Quick, think of something concussed!

“Uh. Duh. Bananas?”

Silence. Angela had the dignity to keep her face straight. “Athena, check pupillary myosis reflex on bed *drei*.”

What seemed like a lighthouse beam was shone on her face and she cursed in Arabic, but before she could block it with her hands, it went off and they were back to the dim ambiance light.

“Miosys bilaterally present; response time adequate,” the AI announced.

“*Danke.*”

“Can’t see anything now,” Pharah complained, momentarily blind, waiting for her eyes to adjust to the darkness.

“That’s why pirates wore eyepatches,” Angela replied absently. The doctor had given her back to the soldier and was taking notes on a sheet of paper.

“Because supercomputers tested their reflexes?”

“No. I’ll show you.”

For a dozen minutes, she did nothing, and the soldier patiently waited whilst the other shuffled through her documents. Then, as if on cue, Mercy walked to the edge of the room, where the light switch was. “Cones take about ten minutes to respond to low light, but pirates had to quickly alternate between the clarity on top of the boat and the darkness below deck. The eye with the patch,” she covered one of her eyes with her hand and motioned for the patient to do the same, “Was not exposed to the sun and thus remained adapted to low luminosity when –”

The doctor cranked the light up to max, sending spikes of pain through Pharah’s head and making her unprotected eye water, then immediately lowered it back to the previous levels.

“ – when they had to move up the deck, then back down,” the blonde concluded, uncovering her eye. The Egyptian did the same only to realize that indeed, she could see clearly with the eye which had remained below her palm, but not with the one which had been exposed to light.

“Holy shit!” the Egyptian blurted. “I always thought they were just one eye missing. Holy shit.”

This time, Angela burst out laughing. “Most people seem to think so. Only half an hour left, by the way,” she alerted. “So whatever you want me alone for, you’d better do it quick.”

Is that – is she...?

She resisted the urge to hide her face behind her palms, because Angela was not a pirate and she could certainly not tell Fareeha was blushing with only one good eye. She pushed the first things which came to mind to the back of her head and went for the second, *viable* ones instead.

“I actually, uh...I had a question to ask.” She scratched her head sheepishly. “I mean, now might not be a good moment – there might not *be* a good moment, but...”

The other’s expression turned serious. “Go on.”

“I just... does it ever bother you?” she took a deep breath before going on. “The people you can’t save, I mean. Of all of us, you’re the one who most... I mean, how... how do you deal with that?”

Angela sighed and thought about it for a long moment. “When we first decide we want to become doctors,” she began, “A lot of us believe we do it... a lot of us think a doctor’s job is to save lives.”

“It isn’t?” she tilted her head.

“It isn’t,” the blonde hugged herself, rubbing her palms over her arms. “Our job, Fareeha, is to alleviate suffering. Our job is to ease the pain. Our job is to comfort where we can and when we

can... and to understand when we can't. We're not... I'm not a god, Fareeha. I've never had such pretenses."

She looked out to the window, stare lost in the distance. "Eventually we all learn that death... it's not the end we work for, it'll never be how we try to stop the sorrow and the anguish...but it is an end, nonetheless. Those people –"

She made eye contact with the Egyptian then, held her gaze in a manner so intense it made her hairs stand on end. "Because they are dead, they are beyond my reach. But also, because they are dead, they are beyond suffering, and so they need me no more. Mercy comes in two shapes. The pretty one is cure – the ugly one is death."

"I didn't expect that from the woman who can resurrect people," she admitted.

"I didn't expect to be the woman who would hold such power," the other replied. "And having it will always be a challenge." Her lips turned into a humorless smirk. "I'm actually glad the window of time for resurrection is only about five seconds. Was I given much longer to think, I'd wonder – which is better, to bring someone back, sometimes only to draw the suffering out for longer... or to not bring them back at all?"

"That's... quite the dilemma."

"It's neither new nor exclusive, to be honest," Angela tucked a strand of hair below her ear. "The morals of life and death and the questions that come with it are as old as medicine itself."

"Observation time on bed three is now complete," Athena's mechanical voice echoed, and the doctor stirred from her position.

"That's that, champ," Mercy grinned her way. "You're good to go. Would you like me to walk you to your quarters, or would you rather stay the night?"

She opened her mouth to reply, and came out with a yawn instead. Suddenly the prospect of standing and walking seemed infinitely less appealing than just letting herself fall asleep, right there. She'd slept on much worse places, after all. She was looking for the words to express this when Angela chuckled and walked over with a blanket.

"I guess that answers that," the blonde muttered, tucking her in. Before she could leave, Fareeha grabbed her by the wrist. Frowning, eyes half-lidded, she blurted out the question on her mind.

"gooutwithmet'morrow?"

The doctor smiled softly, then unexpectedly, with her index finger, poked Pharah on the nose. "You won't remember any of this tomorrow, *Captain Amari*."

"Say yes. Wouldn't forget."

"Mmmmkay." Angela ducked in slightly and planted a chaste kiss on top of her scalp. "I won't remind you. That's your challenge."

"Promise," she managed to slur before fading into complete darkness.

She woke up in the morning with one bitch of a headache, but feeling otherwise well. It took her a moment to figure out where she was and why it wasn't her room, and when she was finally able to mentally place herself in the medbay, she rose to a sitting position and scanned the room for the telltale blonde hair. What she found instead was a very large gorilla sitting in a chair about three sizes too small for him.

"Oh, you're awake," he grunted, standing up to greet her. "Doctor Ziegler had me take her place today to discharge you." Winston approached, patting his large finger on the monitor attached to the stretcher. "I understand she stayed for the night? Did your condition worsen at any point?"

Fareeha placed a palm on her forehead and closed her eyes, making white spots dance in her vision. "I... don't remember."

The primate mumbled. "It's unusual that she'd stay up for something as simple as this... Athena is plenty able of doing the periodical reflex checking procedures," he huffed again. "Well, she's the physician, so she'd have her reasons. She left you breakfast before she went, by the way... did you suffer any eye injuries?"

She stared at the back of her hands, flipped them, stared at her palms. Her vision seemed just fine. "Not as far as I know?"

"Strange," Winston tilted his head, then reached out to the table and carefully handed her a breakfast tray. Her diet was not restricted, so it consisted of milk, cookies, a slice of cake and a banana. And on the edge of the tray, carefully folded – she picked it up and frowned at it – an eyepatch.

A banana. An eyepatch.

Something on the back of her mind whirled but didn't quite click. She was forgetting something, she knew, but trying to force her way through those muddled thoughts only made her headache worse. A banana. An eyepatch. They were related somehow, but the only thing she could come up with was Pirate Winston, and once that mental picture had formed, she decided to quit it.

"Probably left it there by mistake," the gorilla decided. "She seemed tired when she left."

"...probably, yeah," Fareeha agreed reluctantly.

She filled in the paperwork with haste and was soon free to roam the watchpoint's grounds again. Stretching, happy for her reacquired freedom, she rushed to the door. On impulse, she grabbed the eyepatch on the way, and placed it around her bed's headboard.

For the days after, Pharah could never quite shake the feeling that somehow, that piece of cloth meant something.

Chapter End Notes

nothing like a taste of "they got together but not really" in the morning

Systemic Lupus Erythematosus

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Pharah stared ahead, her face serious, her hands rested on the barrel of her gun. She stood next to the door, waiting in silence as Angela – or rather, as Doctor Ziegler – saw to the gigantic line of patients. Every now and then a fight would break out, or a desperate mother would come carrying her child, or the citizens would part to make way to an elder, and when that happened, it was her job to restore some semblance of order.

It was an illusion to think Mercy would be able to attend to even half of these people, and yet every single one refused to move, clinging to hope. She had mixed feelings about doing this – pushing the sick back, raising her voice, sometimes even firing up to get their attention, it all left a bitter feeling in her mouth. And yet, and *yet*, she couldn't deny that it made her a little proud that Angela would entrust her with that job.

The doctor had asked for her. Specifically. And Fareeha was determined to make that decision a correct one. Her dwelling was interrupted when she felt something bump her on the leg. She looked down to see a scrawny little girl, the next in line, tugging at her pants. The child smiled when their eyes met, and Pharah was torn between smiling back and remaining still like a soldier from the British Queen's Guard.

She took a quick glimpse to one side, then the other, just to make sure the boss wasn't looking. She didn't want to break the air of formality, but she wasn't cold hearted either and the little one was just too adorable. Throwing away her act of seriousness for a moment, she graced the kid with a slight smirk. The girl was ecstatic, and burst into a giggle, ducking her head between the Egyptian's legs.

"Hello," she greeted, only to get a wide-eyed silence in response.

It's Colombia, she reminded herself. Try some Spanish.

She racked her brain for the two or three words she knew. Overwatch always gave them a quick crash course in the language and culture of wherever they went, but Fareeha was usually more interested in geographical data, such as the terrain and the weather. Besides, she'd never been much of a book person; she'd had trouble enough learning English to want to give another language a try.

Fareeha went down on one knee to look the kid in the eyes. "Um...hola?"

A young man nearby, the one who brought the child, arched a single eyebrow at her.

"HOLA!" the girl chirped. "*Como te llamas? Mi nombre es Maria –*"

What.

"I see you're already getting acquainted," a voice sounded from behind her, making Pharah jump. She looked up to see Angela standing over her, leaning against the opening of the medical tent, a tired half-smile on her face.

So much for looking professional.

She resisted the urge to facepalm, her cheeks burning at the thought of being caught slacking off

in her job, even though Mercy didn't seem to mind. Still, she stood up, dusting herself, and went back to attention stance. Holding the tent flap open, the doctor beckoned for the man and the child to come in.

"Adelante, por favor," the blonde called.

Fareeha knew Angela spoke languages. Many languages. She didn't know exactly how many, but she estimated it to be something between six and... well, all of them. Seeing the other fluently engage in chatter with the locals made her think, not for the first time, about how fundamentally different they were; back in school, Pharah's favorite class had always been Physical Education... while the Swiss was not only a prodigy but also undeniably a *nerd*.

I don't even have a college degree.

The man walked in, grabbing hold of one of the child's hands – And then, much to the Egyptian's surprise, the little girl clung to her leg with her tiny fingers.

"No va a venir, señora?"

"Umm..." She gave Mercy a questioning look, hoping it didn't come off too much as a 'save me'.

The doctor's smile widened. "She wants you to come in too. She's really taken a liking to you, it seems."

"Oh. Ahh..." She scanned the area. Though the line was still long, it was lunch time, and with the sun high, most of the people had recoiled under some shade or another to take a seat and have a meal. She calculated it would be fine for her to take a break from crowd control for a dozen minutes or so, but she checked with the boss regardless. "Do you think it's okay for me to..." she trailed off.

"Of course, *querida*, come in."

She did as she was told, giving the ambient one last thorough look before entering the tent and closing the flap after her.

"Toma asiento, por favor."

Working at Overwatch, and working with Mercy in particular, she'd gotten used to being around conversations in foreign languages she didn't understand. As per habit, she tuned off the speech and focused on the other aspects of communication instead. Human relations, dialogues, leadership – those were things that interested her greatly. The man took a seat, and his agitation was clear. His feet tapped on the ground restlessly. The air of tension rubbed off on the child, who fiddled around the room. If Angela noticed it, she didn't show.

"Qué le trae por aquí?"

The man began speaking quickly, gesticulating wildly with his hands. The doctor let go of her pen and leaned forward, a slight frown in her features. Every now and then she'd nod or echo his words, prompting him to continue. She watched with rapt attention the way Angela made gentle yet firm eye contact, the way her voice was at all times quiet and calm, and despite having zero knowledge of the language, it took her little time to realize how much the blonde set the pace of the talk.

Is it deliberate or instinctive, I wonder?

She observed, with a little bit of awe, how the stiffness rolled off the man's shoulders and he

gradually grew more comfortable, lowering his voice, slowing his speech. The doctor beamed at him, spoke something in a light tone, and then, amazingly enough, he smiled back, breaking into a chuckle.

Suddenly, Angela turned to her, sharing the smile, bringing her into the odd tension breaking moment. The little girl ran up to Mercy, opening her arms for a hug, and the woman's grin turned into a giggle that made something in Fareeha's chest go warm. She asked herself, not for the first time, if the other was aware of her almost magical charisma. She wondered if Angela made *her* as starry eyed as these two patients.

Probably more.

The thought made her flush, and she soothed herself with the thought that from that distance, with her dark skin and under the midday heat, the doctor would never notice it. Indeed, the woman was busy enough carrying the girl to the stretcher to be examined.

"Fareeha, *querida*, would you like to come closer and help me out?"

It took her half a second to realize she was being talked to. "Oh, um, of course, Doctor Ziegler."

"Hold her arm at heart level, please, while I measure her blood pressure – yes, like that, *danke, Schatz*. Now the other arm, *bitte*."

She followed the instructions, unsure if her assistance was strictly necessary but happy to help anyway. Angela moved with an ease that could only come from years of practice; her fingers were swift and danced over the girl's face, prodding specific spots that Fareeha assumed made sense to other physicians.

"Oh! She's got a positive lymph node. Here –" Pharah's eyes widened when Mercy grabbed her hand and gently guided it to a spot under the child's jaw. "Feel it? Mobile and elastic. It's easier if you compare it with the other side." The doctor moved her hand to the opposite jaw angle, then back and forth.

I can't feel anything but your hand on mine –

Angela let go of the Egyptian and brushed her own thumbs over the little one's face, tracing a triangular shape from right under the eyes down the cheeks. "She has a rash here, do you see? *Das Schmetterlingserythem* - butterfly rash."

The doctor sped up her movements then, palpating under the arms – which made the kid giggle – and then over the abdomen. Over the ribs, Angela tapped her fingers, listening to the change in timbre of the sounds that echoed from the light beating.

"*Duele cuando golpeo suavemente en este lado de la espalda?*" the blonde made a fist and gently hit it over the girl's back, on the left side. The little one winced.

"*Sí, señora.*"

"*Gracias, pequeña,*" the doctor replied, picking the girl up again and letting her loose on the ground. She turned to the man, who was now frowning in concern, and exchanged more words in Spanish. He sighed, rubbed his forehead with his palm and paced around for a couple seconds before finally turning back to the doctor and nodding.

"*Necesitamos una prueba de sangre...y regrese en cinco días.*"

The man nodded again before picking up the child and heading for the tent flap. "*Sí, Doctora,*

muchas gracias.”

“*Hasta la vista, señoras!*” the little girl waved, and Pharah waved back sheepishly until the patients were out of sight. When she turned around, she spotted Angela smiling cryptically at her.

“Nice job, *señora*,” the doctor praised, narrowing her eyes at the soldier in a way that made her really uneasy.

“Oh. Ummm. Thanks,” she blurted. “What did she have?”

The blonde sighed and looked up to the tent’s roof, her expression changing to thoughtful. “On the first appointment, it’s almost impossible to tell, but by the symptoms reported, I suspect Systemic Lupus Erythematosus in remission. The butterfly rash is a telling sign, but by itself it’s not enough to confirm it – lupus is a hard diagnosis. ”

“It’s never lupus,” Pharah babbled, then immediately bit her tongue, but it was too late – Angela had arched a quizzical eyebrow at her. She cleared her throat. “I – I’m sorry. Just a silly thing from an old series I used to watch with ma.”

The smirk returned to the other’s face, unintelligible, predatory. Fareeha fiddled with her thumbs.

“Are you questioning over twenty years of medical background based on episodes of *Doctor Haus?*”

She would have answered, but words got stuck in her throat when Angela *gaited* her way. With a single hand, the blonde unbuttoned her white coat and Fareeha watched with wide eyes as the other removed it and, closing the distance between them, wrapped it around her shoulders.

And then she *pulled*, and they were close, so close their stomachs touched and Pharah felt her heart suddenly speed up, hammering in her chest, and now the burning wasn’t only in her cheeks but also everywhere else, and she was filled with Angela’s touch and her smell and her heat and the sharp angles of her face that were so, so close –

“Do you know why pirates wore eyepatches?” Mercy said abruptly, then placed her index and middle fingers on the soldier’s shoulder and pushed her back, gracefully spinning away, leaving a disheveled Fareeha trying to get her brain back in track.

What. What was that. What is this. What the fuck.

“I – I – they. They lacked an eye? Or. I don’t know. To aim better?” she ran her hands over her face, exasperated, assaulted by the strongest feeling of *deja vu*. “I close an eye to aim better, sometimes. I don’t know. I don’t know! I don’t know.”

The lab coat was still on top of Fareeha’s back, leaving the scent of *Angela* all over, looking tiny on the Egyptian’s much wider shoulders. The blonde grinned, shamelessly amused.

“Look it up sometime. You might be surprised.”

Chapter End Notes

guys I got TWO LUPUS CASES last week like seriously what are the odds

Asystole

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

She leaned against the wall, clutching her abdomen, feeling the blood seep between her fingers. She tried to raise her gun, but it was no use, and it fell to the ground with a clang. Each breath sent daggers of pain across her ribs and chest, so much it made white spots dance on her vision. She reached for her radio, but her fingers were too shaky and she couldn't find the trigger for the distress signal.

She has everyone's vitals, Pharah reassured herself. She'll read mine and come.

Footsteps approached, loud and confident, and there he was – former agent Gabriel Reyes, now known as the Reaper, clad in black, strolling her way, shotguns in hand. She knew he could be there in an instant if he wanted, yet he seemed to enjoy seeing the life slowly leak from her.

The corners of her vision blackened, her legs wobbled, and she grabbed a pillar to steady herself, leaving red handprints over the chipped wall paint. And then he was there, pressing the barrel of his gun against her cheek, the metal still hot from the shots leaving a burn on her skin. She didn't flinch, didn't breathe when he moved the weapon to her ribs instead – she'd be a fool to think he'd grant her a quick death – she didn't blink when he laughed, cold and cruel.

Fareeha raised her chin defiantly so that he would know she was not afraid – but when the pain exploded against her side, she couldn't hold back a scream. Her Raptora suit was damaged and battered, but not even intact it could have held the blow of a point-blank shotgun blast. She felt it rip inside her, tearing her organs to shreds. Liquid clogged her airways – blood, her own blood – and she slipped in the puddle forming around her feet and fell to the ground.

She coughed, expelled a mouthful of bright crimson. The pain was unspeakable. Reaper knelt to her side, and through his mask she could see his eyes, how they glinted as he watched her wither and die.

Suddenly, two loud bangs rung through the air, and the man shuddered, eyes widening. She saw him turn, weapons in hand, heard more shots, saw him shake. On the corner of her vision, there she was – her angel of Mercy, unloading her pistol on the enemy until he fell – and then Fareeha saw her lips move, but whichever words were spoken were far beyond her hearing and understanding.

She was so lucky to catch him off guard oh thank you gods thank –

Her thought was unnaturally cut short by death.

Before she could open her eyes, before she could even make a sense of self, there was pain. Pains as if every nerve of her body was being set on fire, and she was suddenly acutely aware of things she had no business knowing – how the nervous impulses traveled down her body, how her blood flowed in her veins, how her organs slowly but surely resumed their functions, how her cells multiplied to make up for the loss – and then her heart started beating and it *hurt*.

She would have yelled, pure animal instinct, but her lips were not under control – not until suddenly they were, back with every muscle, and only then she remembered she was Fareeha Amari, thirty-two years old, Overwatch captain and up until a few minutes ago, dead. She counted to ten before gathering the strength sit up and greet the world.

“Holy *fuck* –” she hissed.

“Captain Amari,” Mercy greeted. “Glad to have you back. How do you feel?”

Her words were flat-toned and rushed and her face was serious. During any given mission, the two were always the personification of focus – no longer Angela and Fareeha, but a soldier and a field doctor.

“Stable. Ready to move.” She pushed herself to her feet with some difficulty, checking the state of her suit. It was a wreck – all of the abdominal and most of the thorax armor were gone, and so was her radio. The thruster, fortunately, still worked – enough to get her out of there.

“Good. We have a distress call from Tracer – estimated extraction time, five minutes, forty three seconds.”

A beep on her helmet told her the coordinates had been received, and Pharah rubbed her hands together, her mind buzzing. Her fingers were sticky with sweat. “My comm is offline – initiate fallback in my stead and let’s get moving.”

“Yes, captain,” the blonde agreed, then pressed the button in her own speaker. “Overwatch agents, Captain Amari orders retreat. I repeat: initiate retreat.” She let go of the microphone and grabbed her caduceus staff. “Retreat initiated.”

Pharah grabbed her gun where she’d dropped it, absently wiping the bloody fingerprints from it, and the two ran outside into open fire, ducking from cover to cover. She saved her thrusters for a critical moment, running to the point marked in her visor instead. They had been expecting the open warfare, that was the very reason Overwatch was there on first place, but the ambush had been a surprise.

Whether Reaper was working on his own or with Talon and whether the two were involved on local conflict, dealing with one side or the other or perhaps even brewing it, was a mystery for Jack and Winston to figure out later. At that moment, however, her job was clear; they wouldn’t be able to put an end to the fighting, not with that twist, and she had to get her agents out safely as fast as possible.

The visor beeped, indicating they’d reached their objective. She kicked the thick wooden door that led into a ruined building, but it didn’t buckle.

“Extraction time cut down to five seconds, captain,” Mercy reported, and the true meaning behind those words didn’t escape her.

Tracer’s dead.

She kicked it again, with much more urgency, then hit it with her shoulder once, twice. It gave in with a crack.

Four.

She ran in, guns at the ready, her visor telling her that her teammate was three floors up. They skidded to a halt in front of a broken staircase, cursing.

Three.

She wrapped one arm around the doctor's waist and hit the accelerator. Immediately, the two were launched upwards, and she shielded her face with her arm, breaking through the debris. The low fuel light flashed inside her visor.

Two.

They hit the ground running, the glow of the charging caduceus staff illuminating their way, and turned the corner. Tracer was there, on the ground, a bullet hole through her temple all the way down, her jawbone visible through ripped skin and muscle, little bits of brain spread over the ground near the feet of two men –

One.

She shot them. *Tra-ta-ta.* One bullet through one's neck – *blood squirted out in jets painting a grotesque picture on the walls* – two bullets through the other's heart – *he clutched his chest and stumbled out a gaping hole in the wall and went **crunch** and lord, did he scream* – and she closed her eyes and prayed, prayed with all her might that they were on time.

“Helden sterben nicht!”

The room was engulfed in light and for one tense moment she was completely blind. And then she heard coughing and whining and Tracer was up, cursing, hugging herself, nails digging so hard on her own arm it drew blood, and Mercy was holding her head, stroking fresh skin, checking the healing. Pharah had an impulse to run to them and hug them and *god are you all right* –

No time. She heard rather than saw the missile zip their way and hit the building, shattering half of it to pieces. The structure groaned and the ground started crumbling. She was quick on her feet, dodging below a metal beam to reach her companions. She grabbed Mercy with one hand, Tracer with the other, and dug her heel at the thruster accelerator, the autopilot aiming itself to their escape route.

They half flew, half were thrown out the structure, and she clung to the two so hard her fingers ached. Below them, living hell – guns fired, Molotovs thrown, people wailing so loud the sound reached them even god knew how many feet in the air. And then the engines of her Raptora suit coughed and wheezed and the low fuel beeping got more urgent.

You've gotta be fucking kidding me!

Mercy opened her wings to decelerate their fall, and even though the Valkyrie was designed to be able to carry the doctor and a patient, the weight of three was far too much and the battle had taken its toll on the equipment. They lost any sort of hope in steering, the ground approaching them at alarming speeds.

It was Tracer who saved them at the very last moment, switching something on her accelerator that seemed to bend the very air around them. Pharah had the bizarre feeling of both stretching and falling in every direction, her stomach turning, and then her feet were on the ground even though the world seemed to spin around her.

“Go, go, go!” she placed a hand on the back of each of her teammates, guiding them, and the three stumbled out through side streets and around corners in a frenzy, until they reached the extraction vehicle and Genji extended a hand, pulling them in and hopping to the driver's seat, and she could finally, *finally* take a breath. She heard the car's engine roar and the tires sing and grabbed a support beam to steady herself.

“Wait,” the soldier yelled over the sounds of war as Tracer pulled the doors to the back of the van shut. “Where’s McCree?”

Mercy let herself fall down to the seat with a loud thud, and roughly ripped the metal halo from above her head. “He’s not coming.”

“What?!” The air was stolen off her lungs. “What do you mean he’s not coming –”

“He’s gone.” The blonde rested her head on her hands. “Dead. I lost him.”

On the corner of her eye, she saw Tracer close her eyes and slide to the floor of the car. “You what?!” She raised her voice. She couldn’t help herself. “When was that?”

The doctor turned to her, expression emotionless. “At fifteen twenty-six. Eighteen minutes ago.”

She gritted her teeth, her head pounding. “And you didn’t fucking think to tell me? Given that I was lacking a goddamn communicator and I’m the fucking Captain of this mission –”

She saw the woman slightly change in posture, eyes flashing. “Pardon me, *Captain Amari*, it might have slipped my mind to inform you – perhaps because, you may be surprised to find out, the resurrection window lasts about five seconds, and at the moment of his asystole *you were dead*.”

The words were like a punch to her face, and she felt nauseous again. Letting go of the beam, she sat down, feeling as if something was stuck on her throat. In an outburst, she hit the side of the van with a fist. Mercy didn’t blink. “You should have told me. We could have attempted a rescue –”

“Do you mean before or after I resurrected Tracer and we were thrown off an exploding building?” the doctor hissed, then ripped off her gloves and her bracers and threw them hard on the floor. “Overwatch was shut down for a reason. Perhaps it’s best it stayed that way. I can only hope that someday you’ll understand that fighting for peace is like fucking for virginity.”

Pharah had faced death only a few minutes before, and yet she found that right then she couldn’t meet those blue eyes.

It would be a lie if she said she hadn’t planned to get completely wasted that night. What she did not plan yet should have expected was that she’d end up knocking on the doctor’s door at two in the morning, completely out of her mind with regret and grief and a bundle of other feelings. She wasn’t surprised to find Angela awake at her quarters, and she wasn’t surprised at the scowl she got when the other opened the door, either – though it still hurt anyway.

“Captain Amari,” the tone was cold and formal. “Unless we’re on emergency call, I find your disturbance deeply unprofessional.”

“Fuck that,” she snapped, pushing her way in, ignoring the flash of anger on the doctor’s eyes. “I need answers.”

The blonde didn’t follow her in, standing at the door instead, arms crossed. “Very well.”

Fareeha had planned on doing this in a much more dignified way, but the moment she opened her mouth, her voice broke and she felt tears run down her cheeks. She sat down on the other’s bed,

because standing was suddenly way too demanding. “You had to choose.”

Angela looked away, giving her back to the Egyptian. “Yes.”

“And you chose me.” She paused, waiting for an answer. She got none. “Why? Jesse was your friend. You knew him from – from before.”

A long moment of silence. “It doesn’t matter,” the doctor finally spoke. “My feelings on the matter are hardly important. You were the captain. You were in charge of the mission. You were priority.”

Fareeha hid her face in her hands, scoffing. “That’s it? Because I was the captain?” she dug her fingers on her scalp. “Because of – of words in a paper, I got to live and he didn’t?”

“Because of words in a paper, those people are killing and getting killed,” Angela retorted, emotionless. “It’s naïve to think it would be any different with us.”

The Egyptian hugged herself, immobilized by heartache and the other’s coldness, staying quiet and still for many minutes. Angela didn’t move either.

“You were against the mission,” she began again.

“Yes.”

“You didn’t want to be there.”

“No.”

“I’d be dead if you weren’t.” She closed her eyes, which conjured an image of a burning shotgun barrel against her cheek. The scars on her body were gone, but the ones on her mind remained. She shuddered, fluttering them open. “I’d be dead. And Tracer... we all would.”

“Probably.”

Talk to me, she wanted to scream. “Do you blame me for it?” she asked instead.

“Looking for blame is a pointless exercise,” Angela deflected.

“But do you?” she insisted.

A pause. “A little, yes.”

She didn’t think she could hurt more at this point. She was wrong. She shut her eyes again, letting the tears run free, trying to elaborate the thoughts in the back of her mind that needed to be let out. “You know, the worst of it is – is that part of me is glad. Glad, you know? That it wasn’t me. That I lived to see another day.”

She felt hands touch her shoulder, felt the bed move when Angela sat next to her, and then she was pulled into an embrace and the two fell on their backs together, and she buried her face on the doctor’s shoulder and let her body shake with sobs, until the soothing hum and the steady caress on her nape calmed her down. She looked up to see a slow trickle of tears running down the blonde’s cheek, and it made her chest tighten, raising a question –

Who takes care of the caretakers?

She switched places then, hugging her, and her arms were large enough to envelop the whole of the other’s smaller frame. Angela didn’t protest, and Fareeha pressed her stomach on the woman’s

back, and her cheek against the doctor's neck, taking comfort on their shared warmth. The proximity made her flush, but Angela wasn't looking and right then, it didn't much matter.

Eventually, their breathing slowed down. Eventually, she felt her consciousness begin to slip.

"I'm sorry," Angela whispered, making the Egyptian stir.

"I'm sorry, too," she replied, feeling a weight lift off her chest.

"I don't regret it," the blonde suddenly blurted, then rolled over to face her. Fareeha was too dazed to react to the movement or to process the statement, but she still felt her cheeks respond with a burn when Angela touched them with her index and middle fingers. "I'm glad you lived, too."

Chapter End Notes

trusting me with your feelings was a mistake

The Jaundice

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Her face twisted in a frown, Pharah watched water trickle down and wash away the soap from her arms, hands lifted, fingers closed and pointing up like an Italian mama in a fierce discussion. Angela stood next to her, watching, her face completely covered except for her eyes.

“Now close the tap with your elbow – careful, else you’ll have to wash it all over, *again*.”

She tiptoed and shut down the water flow, resisting the urge to rip off the hot and itchy mask on her face.

“Now you have to dry yourself with the sterile rags,” the doctor explained. “It’s simple, really: what touches your elbow cannot touch your hands. Watch me do it, then give it a try.”

She furrowed her brown in concentration.

“One side for the left palm,” the blonde explained. “One side for the right palm.” She opened the cloth and folded it, exposing fresh faces of fabric. “Now drag it up your arm, but never down – the rule is, if it touches your arms, then it must not touch your fingers.” She dried herself, moving her hands in a zigzag.

“Now, here’s the tricky part. All the available faces of the cloth are contaminated, so you’re going to have to do –” she slid her fingers between the folds of the rag and, thrusting it in an upwards movement, flipped it in the air. “– this.”

“...oh.” Fareeha took one deep breath. “Okay. Yeah. I can do this. I got this.”

She reached out to her towel, unpacked it, and as carefully as she could muster, began drying herself up –

“Contaminated.” Angela spoke. “Go wash your hands again.”

She cursed profusely in Arabic, letting out a stream of words that would make a sailor blush. It took her two more tries to get it right, and by the time she did, her hands were wrinkly from the water and her skin hurt from too much washing.

“All right, so far so good,” the blonde praised. “We can go on to the next step – the surgical coat.”

Speak for yourself, she thought grouchily.

The coat was easy enough – Angela jumped into hers with practiced ease, then helped Fareeha put it on, and the Egyptian would swear to god that it weighted about as much as her Raptora suit. And then, the doctor picked up a pair of paper bags and opened one, revealing a pair of rubber gloves. She heard the woman take one long, deep breath.

“...So. Here’s the deal with the gloves,” She pointed to a place where they were folded. “Your hands are disinfected, but the gloves are sterile. So your fingers must not touch their outside, but they can touch their insides, and the outside can touch the outside and the insides can touch the insides. Got it?”

No

“Uhm-hm,” she grunted in agreement, watching Angela get ready, mentally mimicking her movements. When she was done, she nodded for the soldier to continue.

You can do this, Fareeha.

She picked the gloves up –

“Contaminated.”

She discarded them. Angela produced another little paper package and threw it on the table.

She picked the gloves up –

“Contaminated.”

She picked the gloves up –

“Contaminated.”

She picked –

“Contaminated.”

“You’re enjoying yourself,” she accused, because she could see the little wrinkle on the corner of Angela’s eyes that told her the other was probably grinning so hard it hurt. If looks could kill, the glare which Fareeha gave the doctor would probably do more damage than her rocket launcher.

“A little –” the other admitted shamelessly, “– contaminated.”

Pharah wasn’t by default a very patient person. Her eyelid twitched. “Why didn’t you get Winston to do this instead?”

“...Winston is a *gorilla*.”

“So?” she snapped, tossing out a pair of gloves before Angela had the chance to open her mouth to inform her of the thrice-blasted germ status.

“So,” the doctor dragged the word out, speaking slowly, as if she was talking with someone a bit dull in the head. “I don’t have gorilla-sized gloves. Or gorilla-sized instrumentation. Or, you know, a way to keep all the fur – *contaminated*.”

“I get it, I get it!” she hissed, slapping her palms on her forehead –

“Contaminated,” Angela repeated, and now she was actually laughing out loud. “Off with the coat, and go wash your hands again.”

“Fareeha, pass me the curved hemostatic clamps, *bitte*,” Angela asked from the other side of the stretcher, not taking her eyes off the patient she was currently in the process of cutting open.

“The what now,” the Egyptian replied, frowning, slightly uneasy.

It wasn't exactly the blood which bothered her – she was a soldier, after all, she was used to it. Rather than that, it was the deliberate, calculated slicing which made her skin crawl. The rational part of her knew it was necessary and actually saving lives, but something primal within her spoke really loudly against it.

Somehow, her brain seemed acutely aware of the distinction between inflicting wounds in the heat of a battle to survive and this therapeutic cutting, well planned and *painless* and *quiet* and so very eerie. She found she was way more comfortable with the former. Battles were natural, animal instinct. Opening another being to fix him up inside definitely wasn't.

“The dull bent scissor-things,” Angela clarified, meeting her eyes for a split second.

“Oh.” She picked the dull-bent-scissor-things and handed them over.

“I'm going to take the baby out in a bit,” the doctor informed. “Then I'll hand him to you and close up the c-sec. Drag the table next to me so I can reach the instruments, then move back to where you're standing and be ready.”

She pushed the metal tray across the room, clumsily bumping into it and making the instruments rattle. The noise made her wince.

I hate this.

She was never, ever, *ever* letting the blonde talk her into this again. The surgery was long and slow and creepy and Fareeha had to stay still on a closed room for way too long and she *didn't like that*. Her legs hurt, the gloves were sticky, the clothes were too hot, the elastic on her surgical cap which had been no bother at first now felt like it was squishing her skull –

HOLY FUCKING –

She had oh so many years of field expertise, of battles and gore and people blowing up in front of her, and she had been warned of what was about to happen, yet nothing could ever had prepared her for the moment Angela inserted her hands inside the woman's abdomen and pulled out *a goddamn baby and it's inside a bubble thing what the shit what the shit what the –*

And then the blonde made a slice on the thin, opaque membrane thing – *the placenta*, her brain informed – and it burst, liquid spilling from it, exposing the baby into the air. Angela cut the umbilical cord, then picked the tiny little human and gave him a slap across the butt. Immediately, the child yelled in protest, loud and clear.

“Ah!” the woman exclaimed with satisfaction. “Good lungs, this one.”

I'm inside a scene from Alien.

She was handed the crying baby, all covered in blood and some weird goo, and she wrapped a towel around him, trying to clean the kid as best as she could without letting him slip down to the floor.

I'm never doing this again.

“Danke, Schatz.”

She didn't know what the words meant, but the way Angela said it, the way her voice went soft,

the odd way she made the “sch” sound, the –

Never, she mentally repeated, trying and failing to calm the child. *Not ever. Never-ever-ever-ever. Angela can get Lena or Lucio or bring back the twelve holy disciples of Jesus, but I am NEVER EVER EVER –*

Somehow, she couldn't quite make herself believe it.

Fareeha was in a much better mood after a change of clothes and a breath of fresh air. Stretching, her legs still aching, she zigzagged her way to the nursery, holding a bottle of water and a banana, because she knew Angela hadn't eaten yet and wouldn't leave the ambulatory until she was done testing the newborn for every single disease known to humanity.

A fuzzy thought about taking care of the caretakers crossed her mind, but she didn't give it much attention, opening the door to the babies' room as quietly as she could muster. Sure enough, the other was there, standing over a crib, scribbling on a paper stuck to a clipboard. The doctor turned only briefly to acknowledge Fareeha's presence, then resumed writing.

Pharah waited for her to be done, knowing it would be no use interrupting before.

“So how's the kid?” she asked once the blonde had pocketed her pen. “I brought this for you, by the way,” she passed the food on.

“*Danke schon.*” Angela smiled in a lazy, easy way that made her all warm inside. “He's doing all right. I was worried about his lungs, but he's a strong little boy. He's got a bit of icterus, but that's normal after birth – it should be gone in a few days.”

“Icterus?” she queried, taking a peek at the sleeping child. He seemed perfectly fine to her.

“Jaundice,” the doctor explained in between bites. “He is yellow.”

Fareeha took one long look at the baby, his smooth chocolate skin and adorable little curls, and wondered for a moment if perhaps she was colorblind.

...He is black, she concluded.

“I don't see it,” she admitted. “He doesn't look yellow to me.”

Angela grinned, her expression turning to somewhat a little bit evil. “It takes practice, especially when they're dark skinned. But I've got twenty years of medical work on the record,” she paused for one meaningful moment. “...I'm really good at detecting even the smallest changes in skin tone.”

She frowned, the gears in her brain turning and clanging while she tried to figure out what the hell the doctor seemed so goddamn smug about –

Oh. *Oh.*

She felt her cheeks abruptly begin to burn.

“... I can see you blush from across the room, Fareeha.”

She thought she would die of embarrassment right there, but something seemed to snap inside her and being caught red-handed didn't matter anymore because she was just so *done* with the doctor and her games.

She delicately pushed the door closed and took a step forward, blocking the exit. Angela tilted her head, eyes narrowed. "You know, I'm not a doctor," she began, moving closer, cornering the other.

"Is that so," the blonde replied in a monotone, not intimidated.

"Uh-huh. You know what this means?" Another step. Mercy's back hit the room wall.

"Enlighten me," she answered, the flatness in her tone driving Pharah *insane*.

"It means," Fareeha placed her palm against the wall, next to Angela's face, towering over her a good three centimeters, "That to see people blush," she closed the distance between them, and now their abdomens touched and she felt a familiar heat coil at her belly. "I have to look –" foreheads pressed together, their noses brushing, and she could feel the warmth of the other's breathing against her skin, " – really fucking close."

Their lips met with a voracity that surprised her, Angela's hands sweeping the length of her neck, stopping at her nape, nails digging not quite enough to hurt. She parted the doctor's mouth open with her tongue, pulse quickening at the response, breath hitching when her lips were caught between teeth and tugged at. Her hands at the other's waist, moving to the small of her back, and then frozen in place when the kiss was broken, only so Angela's lips could find her neck to bite and lick and *dear god where did she learn to kiss like this* –

She pulled away to catch her breath, one hundred per cent sure that tan skin or not, her blush could be used as a new lighthouse in the Pacific.

"Go out with me," she exhaled, still dazed.

"*Finally!*" Angela hissed, tracing a thumb over Fareeha's jaw. She shivered at the contact. "You left me waiting for *months!*"

The Egyptian frowned. "What's that supposed to mean?"

The blonde's finger stopped at her chin, moving up to outline the shape of her lips, and she closed her eyes once again, drowning in the feeling.

"It means *yes*."

Chapter End Notes

Ladies and gentlemen we've now reached the end of this story, I hope you enjoyed the ride and that it made up for the last chapter angst; A lot of thanks to everyone who left their kudos and thankier thanks to those who commented, you guys really made my day and I just hope y'all had as much fun as I did!

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!